

Daily Herald, June 27, 2005

Among the more enlightening pieces of information passed on to local law enforcement officers last week at a summit on gangs was the 2005 National Gang Threat Assessment report.

Published by the federal Bureau of Justice Assistance, the report is the result of a survey of 455 law enforcement agencies throughout the country by the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations.

The survey developed an estimate that there are currently 21,500 youth gangs in the United States, with 731,500 members and identified regional trends.

In the Midwest, 65 percent of the agencies surveyed reported that gangs are involved in criminal activity in their communities, with vandalism, assaults and firearms violations the crimes most often committed by gang members.

A little over 50 percent of the surveyed Midwest agencies found that gangs are heavily or moderately involved in drug distribution with crack cocaine and marijuana the most preferred drugs.

Midwestern gang members are also more apt to conceal their affiliations and colors to avoid detection, the report says, and are forming alliances to facilitate crime and drug trafficking.

Gang activity is also increasing around college campuses and Indian reservations, the report says.

The report was distributed to local police and government officials at a conference June 20 hosted by U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk and federal law enforcement officials.

Help for abusers: A Safe Place/Lake County Crisis Center is now offering a treatment program for Spanish-speaking domestic abusers.

The Intervention Program for Domestic Abuse and Violence provides court-ordered assessments for clients and a weekly group treatment services.

The program features experienced, culturally-competent facilitators and abuser treatment covers a 24-week period in compliance with local and state protocols for such programs.

Court-ordered assessments are available by appointment, while the weekly group sessions meet at a Waukegan location from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Thursdays. For information, call A Safe Place at (847) 249-5147.

Campaign successful: Gurnee police conducted a seat belt violation crackdown between May 23 and June 5 in conjunction with a national push to get people in vehicles to buckle up.

During the two-week operation, officers issued a total of 139 citations, 120 of them for seat belt violations.

Other tickets issued included three for driving on a suspended license, four for driving without a valid license, eight for driving without proof of insurance and four others for traffic or equipment violations.

A department spokesman said the occasional campaigns for seat belt law compliance are bearing fruit, as the national average for seat belt use is around 80 percent and close to 90 percent in Illinois.